A Time Of Rest

There is a trite old saying that “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”. In the annals of Cambria history, there are many illustrations of the “play” that this village engaged in.

A favorite picnic spot before Cambria had a park was where the first sewerage building was eventually built. The area was called the Factory Woods for it was near the old woolen mill west of the village.

One of the more unique “games” indulged in by townspeople was located in a long narrow building which was built in 1894 on North Madison Street, on the site of the home of the late Mrs. Millie Withun. It housed the sport of ice curling, popular with the men of Scotch lineage living in the community.

The earliest curlers were Joe Sanderson, Sr., Thomas Cottom, Sr., Robert McConochie, Asa McCall, John Baillies, Sr., and John Houston. The next generation of Cottams, Sandersons and Baillies were also featured in bonspiels along with Tom and Henry Jones, Henry Schemmel, Sam Dodge and later Perley Dodge, Bob and John Morris, Dave Price, D. M. Rowlands and Evor O. and John E. Roberts.

In 1895 the hall had been fitted to entertain the crowd assembled for the Welsh Jubilee, the semi-centennial celebration of the settlements of Cambria and Welsh Prairie. The seating capacity was between 1,000 and 1,200 and a stage sufficient in size to seat all the singers and those who took acting parts. Later, in 1908, heat was furnished for spectators and visitors.

The Cambria curlers entered bonspiels in neighboring towns as well as in Madison, Milwaukee and Minneapolis, and trophies decorated many Cambria homes. Some families also acquired prizes of chest of silver, jackets and other items which were some of the awards given.
Curling was once so popular in Cambria that Mr. E. O. Roberts was at one
time the president of the Wisconsin Curlers Association.
The Depression in the 1930's and the increase of sport activities in the high
school had their effect upon the lagging interest in the curling sport and sometime
in the 1940's the building was razed.
However, area interest has not abated as Pardeeville High School will again
offer curling as a part of their athletic program.

Baseball

Another game originated as baseball fever swept the country in the 1880's
and 1890's. Cambria joined the epidemic by sponsoring two local baseball teams,
the Cambria Whites and the Smoothfaces. These two teams were athletic forces in
the area and contributed several players to the then budding army of National
League baseball.

One such was Davie Jones, Cambria born and reared. He was one of nine
children of Mr. and Mrs. Evan B. Jones who lived 'half way up the hill and across
the dam'.

Davie Jones continued his career in the sport to become one of baseball's
outstanding outfielders and shortstops before World War I. In the 1907 World
Series he batted .353 for the Chicago Cubs while Ty Cobb was hitting .200.

Upon retirement, Davie became a pharmacist, and it was on April 19, 1965
that he was inducted into the Wisconsin Hall of Fame in ceremonies at the
Milwaukee Arena.
Two other contributions to the game of baseball were the Dodge brothers, Ben and Willard, in 1905 and 1906. After playing with the local teams, this duet joined the LaCrosse team of the Wisconsin State League. This battery was instrumental in helping to win the pennant for the club. Pitcher Willard won 20 games and was second in the league in strikeouts. In 1906 he was drafted by the Chicago Cubs of the National League and farmed out to Omaha of the Western League where he won fourteen games for their third place team.

Growing, expanding, diversifying, baseball continues to exert its entertaining capacity. Area high schools still compete as energetically as the Dodges and Davie ever did. However, a young offshoot of baseball, the game of softball, now holds the drawing card that once belonged to the Cambria Whites.

Music Hall

Further entertainment was found at the largest hall between Milwaukee and Portage, which was known as the Cambria Music Hall. Built in 1899 and dedicated in 1900, this center offered a variety of entertainment. However, it was called a music hall since many townspeople considered theaters sinful places. In the early years there were Welsh Estiddfods, which were competitive programs; Welsh Male Choruses, such as the Royal Welsh Male Chorus from Wales of twenty voices; Robert M. LaFollette spoke there; road shows of Shakespearean plays and vaudeville, home talent plays, grade school programs, graduation exercises held there were for the Class of 1932, after that, the gymnasium built at the high school was used.

Music Hall from 1898 — 1899
In the early days of this century, Memorial Day programs were also held here on the afternoon of the 31st. Originally these programs had Civil War veterans as guests of honor with a program of songs, music, recitations and speakers. The 1920's saw World War I veterans occupying the center stage. Funerals were also held here for two highly esteemed citizens, one being Mr. David G. Williams, the village miller and Civil War veteran. He had been with Sherman's army marching through Georgia. The other was Mr. Evor O. Roberts, well-known businessman and the cold storage operator and banker who died in 1918.

Movies were shown at the Hall in the 20's, Mrs. W. R. Williams accompanied at the piano which was purchased through the efforts of the ladies of the village.

The building was on the south-east corner of Scott and W. Edgewater Streets, facing north. The main floor had a seating capacity of 800. The seats had been purchased from the Davidson Theater Co. and were originally from the Pabst Theater in Milwaukee. There were two furnaces, purchased from O. J. Williams. Wood was the fuel used until 1908. Later, in 1909, coal was used. Lighting progressed from carbide to gas and finally electricity in 1918.

Looking at the drop curtain for the stage one saw a large picture of the Plano Harvester Plant, Plano, Illinois, painted on the canvas which could be rolled up by a man in the wings, out of sight of the audience. Half of the cost of the curtain was donated by the Plano Harvester Company, a total of about $400.00. The interest of the company was due to the fact that it's President was William H. Jones, a boy raised on a farm in Portage Prairie, five miles north of Cambria.

However, the old Hall was never a money making institution and great care was required to keep it out of debt. The original investors, Evan O. Jones, John Slinger, John H. Houston, Thomas E. Williams, Morris J. Rowlands, D. R. Williams, George Beyer and Issac Parry, raised money for the enterprise, $3,000.00 by issuing stock to sell at $50.00 a share, each shareholder entitled to one vote. During the time of incorporation Evan O. Jones was the first president, and he set up the Articles of Incorporation. The other board members were: David M. Rowlands, treasurer, C. A. Scott, secretary through the life of the corporation. David R. Jones was the architect of the building, and Jasper Dexter was manager until his death in 1918. Lewis Peters then served in that capacity until the time of the closing of the Hall.

The advent of the television and radio brought new forms of entertainment, and interest in uses for the Hall had fallen off. At a meeting of the shareholders it was determined that the cost of extensive repairs needed to make the building safe again would far exceed any future remuneration. So, with appreciation for its past history, the board thought it best to tear down the Music Hall. In 1941, the building was sold to Mr. Russell Moore of Doylestown who made use of the lumber for building purposes. In 1946, the present fire house was erected on the site.
The Park

Finally, the most recent addition to the entertainment facilities of the village was in the form of the Cambria Park. First conceived in 1915 by the Village Board, they purchased the first piece of land along the south shore of the mill pond. This group proceeded to level it, set up a temporary bath house and appoint a Park Board which saw Mr. Dan Williams (Glyn) act as head of that body from 1919 to 1934. It was during his administration that the now annual Park Day originated in 1921.

During the early years, several individuals and organizations made improvements possible. The North Star Nursery, the Wisconsin Power and Light Co. and local individuals were responsible for the first bath and shelter houses, tree and shrub planting, the circular driveway and the lay out for a tennis court.

In 1924, other contributions were made by the Howell brothers of Minneapolis (drilled a well), Dr. Curtis Evans and the Presbyterian K. D. Society (a big swing set), and local businessmen (the bandstand). The village trustees also had the shoreline embankment made of stone and concrete at this time.

The following year Mrs. George Beyer gave a donation for a group of evergreens, and Mr. Robert Tarrant made several sizable gifts for improvements among which were the pillars at the entrance gate, fencing, extra playground equipment and a large concrete swimming pool and wading pool. In the realm of beautification, an instrumental force was Mrs. Al Hopkins and recently the Garden Club. All of the above were cared for initially and for several years by Mr. Owen W. Jones in the role as caretaker.
Planting trees in the Cambria Park, 1921. The trees were a gift from the North Star Nursery, Pardeeville.

It was in 1937 that the Mill Pond was purchased by the Village Board to complete the physical grounds of the Cambria Park.
Down through the years, the Park Day project has been a unified village effort, all proceeds going for maintenance and upkeep of these grounds. Continued gifts and efforts of individuals and groups have also aided the park.
It is because of those efforts, in part, that the most recent improvements have been made by the Park Board and Village Board. The refinements are a new filtering system in the swimming pool, re-routing and re-surfacing the road, improving the lighting, building shelter houses and outdoor grills, and constructing pedestrian steps at the entrance which were promoted by Mr. Lester Prochnow.

So the park continues to influence the "games" and entertainment pastimes of Cambria.
A warm summer’s night, the park, band music - all ingredients of a pleasurable evening in Cambria during the early 1900’s.

The band in this imaginary picture would have been the Cambria Coronet Band. This band was featured in the 1912 Cambria Homecoming celebration as ‘accompanying the large crowd to the depot to meet the crowd of visitors expected’ and the Pardeeville Band, with whom they gave a concert. The Cambria Band was featured elsewhere also on the three-day program.

Ervin Williams, of the Tan-Y-Blwch family, developed through his own efforts and interest in music into a fine musician and a driving force in this band as well as the band director. It was due to his endeavors the Cambria Band was strengthened, and he organized a band in Friesland in 1914 as well. These bands were playing concerts regularly in both villages, and they were popular features at County Fairs and other functions.

At its height in activity in 1937, the band numbered thirty-one members. It also benefited then by way of uniforms and instruments from the generosity of Mr. Robert Tarrant.

As the band was incorporated into the high school curriculum, the Cambria Coronet Band faded away, but the Friesland Band still continues to give regular concerts there during the summer.
1937 Cambria Band in uniforms furnished by Mr. Robert Tarrant.

Back row — Charles Berger, Portage; Alvin Bobholz; Wilbert Sommers; Wesley Sommers; Leroy Griffiths; Vincent Gorsuch, Drum Major; Charles Vesely, Portage; William Jones; Ed Woodward; Robert Closs; Tom R. Jones (Coed-Mawr). Middle row — Flag-Bearer, Hubert Cottam; Viola Smith; David Williams (Tan Blwch); Clarence Tesch; Orlan Barden; Nona Owen; H. P. Thompson, Pardeeville; Russ Wing; Darwin Froelich; Robert Williams (Tan Blwch); Harry Geisler; Olive Smith; Jerome Benson, Flag-Bearer.

Front row — Maurice Jones; Tom W. Roberts; William J. Jones, (Bass; Paul Bobholz; Ervin Williams, Director; Eldon Barden; Carol Sommers; Gilman Neef; Curtis Sanderson; Harry Wing.

The Gymanfa Ganu

The Gymanfa Ganu was first held on a Sunday evening, August 6th, 1944 in the Olivet Church, at the close of a three day celebration of Cambria’s Centennial year.

John Williams (Llwyn-non) of Chicago was the director and Howard Williams of Minneapolis was the organist.

Large audiences continue to attend this yearly event to the present time.

(1976)

Cambria celebrated its Centennial year with a three day event on August 4, 5, and 6, 1944.